UNITED NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1992/SR.5
19 June 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

EXECUTIVE BOARD

1992 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York.
on Monday, 15 June 1992, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Miss SETH (India)

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

OPENING STATEMENTS OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

1. The CHAIRMAN said that from earliest times, children had symbolized the continuity of life. It was the universality of concern for the well-being of children which had brought nations together in the historic World Summit for Children in 1990, at which the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s and the Plan of Action had been adopted. Despite such concern, however, and more than four decades after the establishment of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), it was children all over the world who suffered the most. As late as 1990, 38 countries had registered under-five mortality rates ranging from 142 to 297 per 1,000 live births, and in six countries, 20 to 40 per cent of infants had been born with low birth weight. The struggle against poverty and deprivation was perhaps the most decisive one of the twentieth century, and UNICEF, through its advocacy efforts and programmes was at the forefront of that struggle.

2. The universal child immunization programme was among the most successful of the Fund's efforts. The achievement of 80 per cent immunization coverage in 1990 had been sustained in 1991. In October 1991, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) had convened an international policy conference on "Ending Hidden Hunger" at Montreal, Canada, in order to mobilize support for micronutrient goals. The UNICEF/WHO "baby-friendly" hospital initiative, launched in June 1991, had focused world-wide attention on the need to promote and protect breast-feeding.

3. The Fund's highest priority, however, had been devoted to an effective follow-up to the World Summit for Children. Most countries were currently engaged in efforts to prepare national programmes of action. To date, 45 countries had finalized their programmes; preparations were under way in 60 countries, and 28 others had submitted draft outlines.

4. The status of women throughout the developing world had emerged as a major issue in 1991 and 1992. Without the mobilization of women, child development could not be achieved. Despite overwhelming evidence that improvement in the status of women, particularly in the economic sphere, had a substantial positive impact on child nutrition and health, United Nations programmes and advocacy efforts had so far tended to neglect that aspect of development. Programmes for women must include girls, since it was at puberty that active discrimination against women began. It was therefore crucial to devote greater attention to the promotion of health care, safe motherhood, family planning, nutrition, literacy, skills development and employment for both adolescent girls and women. Like universal child immunization, the improvement of the status of women must attain the dimensions of a global movement. The Government of India and UNICEF had recently sponsored a regional seminar on women in order to highlight the issue, and it was to be hoped that similar seminars would be held elsewhere in the developing world.

(The Chairman)

5. Widespread moderate and severe malnutrition continued to affect, on average, more than 33 per cent of children from birth to four years of age in countries with very high under-five mortality rates. With more than 177 million malnourished children in the world, and with the number of births likely to reach a peak in the year 2000, providing supplementary nutrition to more and more children should become a top priority.

6. Another major issue for a growing number of countries was structural adjustment, which almost always led to reductions in social-sector spending. UNICEF should begin to mobilize public opinion in the developed world in support of a global effort to assist countries undergoing economic readjustment. The long-term sustainability of direct interventions in the social sector was also in question. As the costs of delivering such programmes were increasing day by day, alternatives must be found. Institutions must be developed which would enable the poor to manage the programmes on their own. Successful examples of community initiative throughout the world must be identified, studied and shared.

7. In that context, the question of universal education required urgent attention. UNICEF and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) should take the lead in helping various countries to formulate action plans with time-bound, quantified targets for literacy levels, enrolment and other educational indicators.

8. Much remained to be done with regard to the children's vaccine initiative launched in 1990. UNICEF should strengthen the capacities of developing countries to produce the vaccines, the medicines and the equipment required for the achievement of the Fund's goals.

9. Mr. GRANT (Executive Director) said that he wished to pay tribute to the 40,000 children who died each day, largely from preventable causes. Such deaths were a waste of the world's most precious resources.

10. It was becoming clear that any society which could not care for its children could not regard its development as in any sense sustainable. In that context, UNICEF welcomed the incorporation into the Plan of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the "Earth Summit") of all the goals of the World Summit for Children, and the Conference's explicit endorsement of those goals as essential to preserving the Earth.

11. Over the past decade, a world-wide movement had arisen on behalf of child survival and development which could only be described as revolutionary. To date, 117 countries had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which, for the first time in history, established standards for society's obligations to children. In the 18 months since the World Summit for Children, most countries had not only sustained their 1990 achievements in the area of universal child immunization, but had made progress towards the goal

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of eradicating poliomyelitis and attaining 90 per cent immunization coverage by the year 2000. In 1991, WHO and UNICEF had been approached by infant formula manufacturers anxious to collaborate in ending free and low-cost distribution of milk substitutes, which were the main obstacle to reviving breast-feeding. That had opened the door to the "baby-friendly" hospital initiative. In addition, the goal of ending free or low-cost distribution of infant formula in all countries by the end of 1992 had now been fulfilled in 105 countries.

12. The Donors Conference on Assistance to African Children, to be convened by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Dakar in November 1992, would be of great importance for children everywhere. The seriousness with which each African country and each donor country responded to the OAU invitation would be the key test in 1992 of its commitment to the goals of the World Summit for Children and of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

13. The situation in Yugoslavia, in several of the Republics of the former Soviet Union and in the Horn of Africa raised the issue of protecting children and other vulnerable groups from the horrors of civil war. One step forward in addressing that concern had been the establishment of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, with which the UNICEF secretariat would collaborate fully. It had been reassuring to witness the positive response to the Secretary-General's appeal for $850 million with which to mitigate the unprecedented drought in southern Africa; in one day, that appeal had generated contributions totalling $650 million.

14. As reflected in the proposals which were before the Executive Board, the response by UNICEF to the urgent human needs in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the new independent States would be to promote the ethic of a "first call for children" as economic restructuring took place. At the same time, there would be no significant diversion of UNICEF resources from Africa and other poorer parts of the developing world.

15. He expressed appreciation to all donors that had maintained their level of support in 1991 and 1992 after the remarkable increase of 1990. A number of countries, especially Norway, Sweden and Finland, had even increased their contributions in national currencies; that had helped to offset the shortfall of approximately $60 million, due mainly to the strengthening of the United States dollar in 1991.

16. Far more important than income for the Fund's programmes and operations was the overall level of resources for children . Since the World Summit for Children, allocations for child-related programmes in several national budgets had increased by billions of dollars. The United States Congress had appropriated approximately $8 billion in additional funding for domestic programmes over three years. In too many countries, however, too little had been done to increase resources for children. If all major donors raised the proportion of their bilateral official development assistance for human

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priorities to 20 per cent, an additional $4.6 billion could be raised for programmes for women and children. That would amount to approximately two thirds of the estimated $6 to $7 billion in additional external assistance which would be required if the World Summit goals were to be met.

17. During the past decade, there had been a search for ways of ensuring that UNICEF responded more effectively to the challenges of the newly emerging world, which had concentrated on administrative efficiency, strengthened governance and guidance, and more focused priorities for programmes. There had been a number of initiatives to achieve greater administrative efficiency in the secretariat, better determination and oversight of policies and objectives by the Executive Board, and improved governance in general. The Board - which now had 41 members - had also changed its procedures in order to be able to take decisions in a more organized and structured manner.

18. The secretariat had invited members of the Board to meet regularly throughout the year, each time on a different issue, in order to be briefed, to offer initial reactions and to consult their respective Governments. There were also pre-Board briefings in capitals, and briefings at UNICEF headquarters prior to the annual session. The Bureau of the Board had become a stronger, more expert group which was able to provide advice and feedback to the secretariat between annual sessions.

19. As examples of the search for better focusing of priorities and objectives, he cited recognition of the importance of low-cost, mass application techniques and technologies, and the various programme initiatives, notably the consolidation of commitments and opportunities at the World Summit for Children. There were many other ideas and proposals, several offering a great potential for further development and new thinking. He himself had two contributions to make to those discussions: one in the arena of overall reform of the United Nations system, and the other in that of the continuing evolution of UNICEF's own governance and effective guidance. In his view, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, rather than the Executive Board, were the appropriate forums for consideration of and action on the various proposals for reforming the overall system, although it could be useful for those bodies to draw upon the experience of UNICEF and other organizations. He was therefore circulating a note containing suggestions from UNICEF's working experience on how the operational activities of the United Nations system might be improved. One example of that experience was a joint UNICEF/UNFPA policy paper on inter-agency collaboration on population and family planning.

20. There was also much more that could be attempted within the UNICEF arena in terms of developing its own governance and management. There were a number of measures, which should ultimately have a place in long-term reform, that could improve the Executive Board's capacity to guide and govern the secretariat, and they could be taken without altering the mandate or pre-empting longer-term models and standards. As an alternative to marathon

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sessions of the Board with longer and longer agendas of more and more detailed issues, amounting to endurance tests for delegations and secretariat alike, an expanded Bureau, open to any member of the Board and better representing the full membership of the Board, meeting for a day or two every two or three months with a specific agenda circulated in advance, preparing more thoroughly the issues on the Board's agenda and identifying priority issues for consideration, and addressing and determining specific issues or narrow categories of issues identified by the Board, could make for more effective governance and managerial oversight.

21. He expressed his appreciation to the members of the Reference Group for providing guidance to the secretariat throughout the year as proposals on the structure and format of budget documents were prepared for the current session of the Board. There had been a joint effort to provide greater clarity and transparency in UNICEF documents dealing with income projections, financial plans, staffing, classification of posts and staff costs, programme proposals, including the country programme recommendations and global funds, and the administrative and programme support budget. The revised format and related guidelines, if approved by the Board, would be applied in the preparation of the administrative and programme support budget for the 1994-1995 biennium, as well as the global fund programme budget and country programme recommendations for review and approval by the Board at its session in 1993.

22. As for the future location of UNICEF headquarters, the secretariat had been seeking to identify realistic possibilities without preconceived notions. Initially, it had focused almost exclusively on basic logistical and financial considerations - for example, where UNICEF could find accommodation which provided the best and most complete facilities at a cost which preserved maximum resources for programmes in the developing countries - but as that process had advanced, the host city had turned its attention to preserving the viability for UNICEF of the United Nations district and, in particular, UNICEF House. In response to the competition from other potential locations, substantially improved terms had been offered for the long term, and the City of New York would help UNICEF to find workable additional facilities nearby for expansion. Discussions continued, and it was his belief that a better bargain could be struck.

23. The second phase of the search required a broader perspective. The challenge was to balance complete logistical efficiency, maximum cost reduction and the many locational factors which determined headquarters effectiveness, especially the relationship with partner agencies, members of the Board and other government representatives, the leadership and Secretariat of the United Nations, the non-governmental organizations, the media and other important external contacts. Decisions on long-term commitments should not be made prematurely, but UNICEF should be in position to act quickly and decisively when the time was right.

(Mr. Grant)

24. Despite the many storm clouds overhead and on the horizon, never before in the history of UNICEF had the children of the world stood on such a bright and promising threshold to their future, and never before had the possibility been so great that nations could, if the will was there, devote adequate resources and attention to meeting the basic needs of children and families, and alleviating the worst aspects of the poverty and underdevelopment which crippled them, and in turn their future. The effectiveness of UNICEF derived from its vision and from its capacity to appreciate the broader context affecting the lives and well-being of children and the potential of well-meaning people, organizations and Governments to change children's lives for the better. Many problems lay ahead, not least the problem of money, but it was an exciting task and an unprecedented opportunity, and a challenge which the secretariat welcomed and embraced with enthusiasm.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

25. The CHAIRMAN invited comments on the provisional annotated agenda contained in document E/ICEF/1992/1/Rev.1.

26. Mr. REINO (Observer for Portugal), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Community, said that the Community and its member States had taken note of the declaration of the representatives of the peoples of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Montenegro of 27 April 1992, which stated that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia continued the international legal and political personality of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. That declaration raised questions related to the continuity of Yugoslavia's membership in international organizations, including the United Nations, which were under consideration. The European Community and its member States had not accepted the automatic continuity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in international organizations, including the United Nations, and reserved their position on the question. They therefore considered that the participation in the current session of the delegation in question was without prejudice to future decisions which might be taken by the European Community and its member States on that and related issues.

27. Mr. HUSLID (Norway), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, referred the Board to the statement made by the Nordic Ministers for Foreign Affairs on 4 May 1992, concerning the succession of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in international organizations, including the United Nations. It was the position of the Nordic countries not to accept the automatic continuity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in international organizations, including the United Nations. They considered that the participation in the current session of the delegation in question was without prejudice to further decisions.

28. Mrs. POTTER STEWART (United States of America) said that the organizational session had enabled the members of the Board and the Bureau to prepare better for the regular session. Organizational sessions would continue to be a useful planning mechanism for future regular sessions. She welcomed the topics selected for the informal sessions, but noted that such sessions were not substitutes for the formal discussion needed for formal decision-making. As UNICEF grew, the schedules for sessions of its Board became tighter and more complex, and her delegation hoped that the rationalization measures agreed to at the organizational session would help to reduce the burden of work. However, it was also clear that more could and should be done to streamline and facilitate the work of the Board.

29. The United States noted that the participation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in meetings during the current session raised questions relating to Yugoslavia's status as a Board member, but it did not believe that the present was the appropriate time to seek a resolution of all such questions. It wished to place on record, however, its view that the proceedings of the current session were without prejudice to their ultimate resolution.

30. The CHAIRMAN said she would take it that the Board wished to adopt the provisional agenda contained in document E/ICEF/1992/1/Rev.1.

31. It was so decided.

GENERAL DEBATE

32. Mr. KOUCHNER (France) said that nearly two years had passed since the World Summit for Children, and although many countries had acted on the commitments made at that time, not all the promises had been kept and not all the problems solved. Much remained to be done, and it seemed that the more one acted, the more one discovered the immensity of the problems. There had been much talk about the Earth at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, but had there been enough talk about children, and especially the children under threat in the streets of Rio de Janeiro?

33. France had increased its contribution to UNICEF by 45 per cent since 1991, and had, in close cooperation with UNICEF, undertaken intense and innovatory humanitarian action. In addition, France had adopted a programme costing 20 million francs for research, training and evaluation to support the decisions of the World Summit for Children in the areas of maternal and child health, nutrition, family planning and education. France also looked to the 1993 conference of ministers from the francophone countries responsible for children for a coordinated response to the World Summit for Children.

34. In the two years since the Summit, the world had been subjected to a succession of conflicts of which children, being among the most vulnerable members of society, were the first innocent victims. During the past year, the Executive Board had been greatly concerned at the plight of Iraqi and Kurdish children, and in spite of UNICEF action on their behalf, their

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situation had not improved sufficiently. Despite continued international protection and free elections, the future of the Kurdish children of north-eastern Iraq remained a sombre one. What had been accomplished thanks to the United Nations in protecting the Iraqi Kurds was a matter for pride, but was even more a reason for not abandoning them. France remained as always at the disposal of UNICEF to carry out humanitarian operations.

35. Since the Summit, major conflicts had erupted in other regions, setting demanding humanitarian challenges before UNICEF. Four thousand women and children had been evacuated from Monrovia; UNICEF was actively involved in efforts to protect vulnerable population groups in Nagorny-Karabakh and similar efforts were under way in Dubrovnik.

36. Despite the various cease-fires which had been instituted, the bombardment of Dubrovnik had continued. The situation there and in Sarajevo remained insupportable, rendering essential a follow-up to all the UNICEF missions to the region.

37. The courageous work of journalists had brought distress calls to UNICEF from many regions. The flexibility and innovative strength of UNICEF had made it possible for France to direct humanitarian assistance to women and children in those regions. The international response to such distress calls would continue to improve, in line with the General Assembly resolutions sponsored by his Government and the Security Council resolutions dealing with humanitarian work and access to victims.

38. He stressed the need to use those legal instruments for the benefit of endangered civilian populations and, in particular, the children of Dubrovnik and Sarajevo. Humanitarian interventions were dangerous but they were still possible, as evidenced by the two French humanitarian missions to Sarajevo, taking emergency medical supplies to the hospital and food for starving children. On behalf of the organizations Pharmaciens sans frontières, Médecins du Monde and Ambassade des enfants, he was appealing urgently to UNICEF to ensure that the United Nations and its agencies would not abandon the victims of the conflict in that area.

39. Responding to the plight of the children of Sarajevo had not deflected his country from its efforts in the third world. Among other undertakings, France had mounted a major humanitarian programme to provide food aid to the population of Mogadishu, in cooperation with UNICEF and the few remaining non-governmental organizations in Somalia.

40. The scope and cost of such emergency operations was too great for the resources of a single organization, however efficient, and his Government had therefore actively supported the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182, on strengthening the coordination of emergency operations by the United Nations. He believed that the reforms called for under that resolution would not undermine the independence of the agencies but would, on the

(Mr. Kouchner, France)

contrary, help them make optimal use of their available resources and skills; unfortunately, such cooperation had not been possible in the case of Yugoslavia. UNICEF had a central role to play in such coordinated efforts, and its position was strengthened by the appointment of its Director of Emergency Programmes, Mr. La Munière, to head the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva. The establishment of that unit in Geneva would provide UNICEF with a strong, decentralized structure enabling it to assert its authority in such sectors as humanitarian aid and aid to the countries of the East.

41. Current emergencies should not, however, divert UNICEF from its primary vocation: assisting development through long-term activities oriented towards children, such as had been exemplified by its 12-year involvement in Cambodia, as the sole United Nations agency present in that country, and by the encouraging results of the Bamako Initiative. There should also be a satisfactory balance between programme costs and effectiveness: a case in point was the expanded programme on immunization, which, despite its considerable gains, absorbed a large portion of the budget to the detriment of other priority programmes, and should therefore be carefully re-examined.

42. The new challenges facing UNICEF, such as the transition of the States of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, required it to adapt its development strategy. The analysis of emergency health situations should be followed by cooperation with Governments, non-governmental organizations and other organizations to study the problems and to submit new proposals. While the report and analyses prepared by the joint WHO/UNICEF mission to the Commonwealth of Independent States had been of a high quality, such missions should not be restricted to fund-raising: UNICEF should use its knowledge of local conditions to foster current projects and those prepared by other organizations, as it had done in Romania, and it could even assist bilateral operations.

43. He commended the Budget Format Reference Group for the substantial progress it had achieved in proposing reforms, with the active cooperation of UNICEF services.

44. If UNICEF was to respond to the challenges for the 1990s identified by the Executive Director in his report, it was essential to mobilize all the potential that could benefit the mother and child. In that belief, France was following with particular interest such initiatives as the forthcoming OAU Conference on Assistance to African Children, since the African continent was, more than ever before, at the centre of UNICEF concern.

45. He urged UNICEF to give maximum attention to the problem of the hundreds of thousands of children orphaned by AIDS. It was essential to create a social structure to accommodate those children, and not to consign them to orphanages. In addition, careful thought should be given to the breast-feeding campaign, in view of the possibility of transmitting the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) through the mother's milk.

(Mr. Kouchner, France)

46. He commended the vital role played by the National Committees in raising public awareness, thereby providing the Fund with its best form of support, as evidenced by the US$ 24 million raised by the French Committee in 1991.

47. While UNICEF remained largely free of the scourge of conformism, that unfortunately was not true of all international institutions, which were not always capable of adapting to the upheavals of history. It was essential for all such organizations to espouse a new world ethic and to take action on an international scale to prevent conflicts, disasters and famines. Before the new world order was proclaimed, it was essential to ensure that such an order would ensure the welfare of all children whose lives had been endangered. The French President had repeatedly affirmed that to assist a person in need did not violate the principle of non-interference. The new forms of collective crimes committed against society necessitated the implementation of new legal provisions. That would not constitute interference, but modern solidarity, fully consistent with the spirit of democracy.

48. Ms. RAVLUM (Norway) said that the reduction of ideological conflict and the movement towards democracy in many countries had increased opportunities to protect the rights and interests of children, but that economic stagnation, particularly in parts of Africa, war, drought and the AIDS pandemic threatened to undermine any progress.

49. UNICEF had played an important role in helping Governments to develop plans of action in line with that launched at the World Summit for Children, and to integrate human development considerations into their own national development planning. Many countries had reviewed their legislation in the light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, often with technical assistance from UNICEF. In Norway, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had prepared a strategy document for assistance to children, whereby greater emphasis would be placed on child-targeted measures and activities in sectors of particular importance to children, such as children's rights, health and nutrition, basic education, care and early stimulation of children, and assistance to children in difficult circumstances. Partner countries and non-governmental organizations receiving funding from the Norwegian Government would be encouraged to give priority to child-targeted activities.

50. The encouraging democratic trends in many developing countries and the new international emphasis on human development had rendered UNICEF's role within the United Nations system more vital than ever. The primary challenge facing many developing countries was to promote human development at a time of economic restructuring and severe financial constraints in the public sector. UNICEF had a key role to play in assisting Governments in meeting that challenge, particularly through the follow-up to the Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children. Cooperation between different agencies, in particular UNDP and UNICEF, was of great benefit to Governments in the preparation of human development plans and initiatives. UNICEF should further develop its cooperation with the development banks, particularly the World Bank, placing at their disposal its knowledge of local conditions. To that

(Ms. Ravlum, Norway)

end, it was necessary to strengthen UNICEF analytical capacity and competence in development issues and policies at headquarters and, more particularly, in the field.

51. The new international climate provided a historic opportunity for the renewal of the United Nations system, while increased multilateral cooperation was essential to overcome the world's new social, economic and environmental problems. The Nordic United Nations Project had highlighted the need for better coordination system-wide and at the national level, and its recommendations had had a positive response from many quarters. The reform process would be further advanced by the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in July 1992, which, she hoped, would propose measures to improve the financing and governance of United Nations funds and programmes, and to strengthen the system as a whole.

52. With regard to the issue of governance, Norway believed that the Executive Board, in its current form, should only deal with the overall issues of strategies and programme and financial priorities, while a smaller body should be concerned with their detailed scrutiny and the corresponding guidance to the secretariat.

53. Norway had always agreed that priority should be given to Africa and had advocated that more resources should be channelled to that continent. It was concerned, therefore, that the supplementary funding programme had resulted in Africa's share of UNICEF resources remaining at approximately one third of total programming. UNICEF should spend more of its resources in Africa, and donors that favoured supplementary funding should take into account the resulting imbalances.

54. With regard to family planning, her delegation looked forward, in future reports, to evidence of progress in the integration of those activities into UNICEF health and advocacy programmes. She noted that in some countries with rather weak administrations and large UNICEF programmes, there was a temptation for UNICEF to take over the execution of activities in the interests of expediency. It was extremely important that all programmes, especially in countries where the need for assistance was great, should aim to strengthen national structures and institutions.

55. Norway wished to see UNICEF strengthen and grow, and was concerned that the funding of UNICEF programmes was not equitably distributed among donor nations. As the third largest government donor to UNICEF, her Government urged other Governments to show greater generosity towards the organization. While future funding remained uncertain and UNICEF had shown understandable conservatism in the plans and estimates prepared for the current session, Norway believed that ambitious goals should be set and that UNICEF should rely on increased efficiency, using the latest technical aids and improved organization, rather than the expansion of staff and administrative projects, to achieve those goals.

56. Mr. MOMBESHORA (Zimbabwe) said that UNICEF was meeting at a crucial time when the world leaders had demonstrated their commitment to safeguarding the well-being of the planet and the prosperity of its people at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. He hoped that the Conference would lead to a greater appreciation of the debilitating problems afflicting the developing countries. New democratic mechanisms were required, designed to integrate environmental and development concerns without imposing conditions, improve the terms of trade, relieve the burden of foreign debt, provide greater access to markets, make technology and financial resources available to developing countries, and reverse the net transfer of resources from developing countries to developed countries.

57. As President Mugabe had stated to the General Assembly in 1991, the establishment of a favourable international economic environment was indispensable to the success of the development of developing countries. Such an environment required debt payment with a human face. As stated in the Executive Director's report (E/ICEF/1992/2, part II), there had been a drop in real resource flows to sub-Saharan Africa from US$ 24.6 billion in 1986 to US$ 23.3 billion in 1990. In those insupportable circumstances, it would be impossible for Africa to realize the targets set in the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children.

58. Document E/ICEF/1992/L.4 outlined the steps that Africa itself was taking towards the achievement of child survival, protection and development, but the level of support accorded Africa was inadequate to its huge requirements and the diversity of its problems, and he regretted that the document had not pointed out the higher returns per dollar which could be realized by investing in Africa.

59. Southern Africa was currently undergoing the worst drought of the century, which threatened to leave 18 million people facing starvation, famine and disease. Agricultural yields in Zimbabwe, traditionally the granary of the region, were expected to drop to 25 per cent of normal levels, adding further hardship to those already caused by the country's current economic reform programme. The scope and magnitude of the drought seriously endangered the country's entire economic structure, and a negative growth rate of 7 to 12 per cent had been forecast for 1992-1993. Massive imports of food were required; food aid would be needed for 4.5 million people in the rural areas, including 1.2 million children under five and 0.8 million lactating and pregnant women, and disabled and elderly persons. An appeal had been launched by the United Nations and the Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) as the first stage in a continuing process of monitoring and assessing emergency needs. Thanking the countries and donors that had already responded to the appeal, he also took the opportunity to urge the international community to continue to provide the necessary support for Zimbabwe and the SADCC region.

(Mr. Mombeshora, Zimbabwe)

60. The severe impact of the drought on the region had revealed the inability of the countries to respond to natural disasters, and highlighted the need for disaster-relief actions by the international community to provide a basis for post-drought recovery and long-term development efforts in the SADCC region.

61. The region was still reeling from the destructive consequences and destabilization policies of apartheid, and the situation of children in the SADCC region, as described in the 1989 UNICEF report "Children on the Frontline", was as true in 1992 as it had been in 1989. It was mistaken to consider apartheid a thing of the past: apartheid had merely changed its face, and thousands of refugee and displaced children continued to suffer from Pretoria's actions.

62. He commended the peace initiatives taken by Presidents dos Santos of Angola and Chissano of Mozambique, and expressed Zimbabwe's grave concern over the violence continuing in South Africa with the apparent involvement of the de Klerk regime. Zimbabwe called for an international initiative to be mounted to end the senseless violence in South Africa, in line with the recommendations of the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and the OAU Ad Hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government of Southern Africa.

63. Particular importance was attached to the proposed OAU Conference on Assistance to African Children, scheduled to be held in Dakar in November 1992, which provided an incentive to many African Governments to complete their own national plans of action in time for the Conference. Zimbabwe had produced a plan of action tailored to its own 1991-1996 five-year national development plan, which took cognizance of its existing programmes and addressed such new problems as street children, drug abuse, AIDS, child abuse and violence against women. While satisfactory progress had been made in the preparation of the plan, resources were urgently required, particularly to address the AIDS pandemic which threatened to erode the valuable gains made by Zimbabwe in health and education services. Zimbabwe sought supplementary funding for its AIDS programme in the amount of US$ 10,275,000 for the biennium 1992-1994.

64. He regretted the diversion of international funding away from Africa to other regions, as was evident from the decline in real terms of the share of supplementary funding contributions designated for Africa.

65. Ms. POULSEN (Denmark) said that UNICEF had two comparative advantages. The first was its field-based and field-oriented organization, whose primary mission was to support the provision of basic services for the survival, development and protection of children, and to improve the status of women in families and communities in developing countries. The second was in the area of advocacy and social mobilization. The Fund's own judgement of its strengths was compatible with the findings of the Danish study, issued in 1991, on the performance of multilateral organizations at the field level, which included UNICEF.

(Ms. Poulsen, Denmark)

66. UNICEF had achieved its unique position at the field level through extensive decentralization, which allowed field offices to cooperate directly with Governments in the preparation and implementation of country programmes. That wise strategy had significantly improved the situation of children and mothers throughout the world.

67. Over the past years, the Fund's focus on global goals had increased, and the heavy emphasis from headquarters on the attainment of those goals in a relatively short period of time could jeopardize the country programming process. It was important that Governments and communities were not reduced to the status of mere recipients, but were treated as absolute equals in the development process. That could be achieved only if local communities and Governments were able to influence the decision-making process.

68. The section on management implications for UNICEF in the Fund's medium-term plan for 1992-1995 (E/ICEF/1992/3) did not give any clear indication that field offices participated actively with headquarters in the dialogue on policy issues. In the view of her delegation, the lessons learned in the field should have a significant influence on the Fund's future plans, and that would be possible only when headquarters and the field cooperated as equal partners.

69. There was also a tendency to increase headquarters personnel. However, in deciding whether or not to establish a post at headquarters, the Fund should consider whether the duties related to that post could be performed at a field location. One of the major functions of UNICEF field staff was to contribute to capacity-building. For developing countries, there was a clear benefit in having as many functions as possible performed at the field level.

70. Agenda 21, recently adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, did not place the necessary emphasis on the highly important issue of population. Reduced population growth was a prerequisite for sustainable development in many parts of the world, and also for the increased well-being of mothers and children. As an organization that dealt with problems of mothers and children, UNICEF must give family planning and population issues a proper place in its activities. In that regard, her delegation was pleased with the report on collaborative programming activities of UNICEF and UNFPA (E/ICEF/1992/L.13).

71. The Earth Summit had had one negative, albeit unintentional, effect on the current session of the Executive Board: the late arrival of documentation. It was essential that the Board should have sufficient time to consider country programme documents. However, it seemed that, at the current session, the Board might have so little time that it would have to rubber-stamp the country programmes.

(Ms. Poulsen, Denmark)

72. Her delegation was pleased that UNICEF continued to accord priority to the least developed countries, most of which were in Africa. While UNICEF expected to increase resources for Africa through supplementary funding, it should be borne in mind that two thirds of the required resources would have to be invested by the developing countries themselves.

73. Her Government fully recognized the importance of supporting the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in their difficult period of transition. However, it was important that such needs did not result in a shift in the Fund's established priorities. UNICEF assistance must continue to focus on the poorest segments of society in developing countries, where child mortality was highest.

74. Denmark had made significant but separate allocations to assist the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Those funds were in addition to the Danish development assistance budget, which in 1992 would reach 1 per cent of Denmark's gross national product.

75. Her delegation welcomed the important restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat that had been undertaken by the new Secretary-General. The Nordic countries had actively participated in the discussions on reform, and in 1991 had submitted the Nordic United Nations Project, which included recommendations for changes in the governance and financing of the major United Nations funds and programmes. The purpose of such changes was to ensure the better use of available resources through an improved division of labour within the system - based on the comparative advantage of each programme - and a more secure and predictable financing system for the benefit of the developing countries. The Nordic United Nations Project would be discussed at the forthcoming session of the Economic and Social Council, where the Nordic countries would submit concrete proposals on reforms.

76. Mrs. OGATA (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the Fund's support for the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was particularly important at a time when UNHCR was facing refugee problems of unprecedented magnitude and complexity.

77. There were currently more than 17 million refugees around the world. Every day, more than 10,000 people were being forced to flee their homes. On the other hand, with the help of UNHCR, every day more than 5,000 refugees were returning home to South Africa, Cambodia and Afghanistan. While UNHCR hoped that refugees would soon be returning home to Angola, Eritrea and other parts of Africa, it was keenly aware of the possibility of new refugee flows elsewhere in the world.

78. Such uncertainties, as well as emergency situations, highlighted the importance of close cooperation among United Nations agencies, particularly UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNHCR, which operated in the field. In particular, UNICEF and UNHCR shared a common concern for the

(Mrs. Ogata)

welfare of children and mothers. About 80 per cent of the refugees under the care of UNHCR were women and children, and UNHCR deeply appreciated the contribution that UNICEF made to their welfare. She hoped that UNICEF would become the automatic supplier of safe drinking water to refugees, just as WFP was the automatic supplier of food.

79. UNHCR was particularly concerned with the issue of refugee children, and she had appointed a coordinator to help increase awareness of the special needs of refugee children and to develop an appropriate policy framework and guidelines for action. In particular, greater emphasis should be placed on developing educational opportunities so that refugee children were prepared to face the future when they returned home. She hoped that the coordinator on refugee children would serve as the focal point for cooperation with UNICEF.

80. Over the past four decades, the activities of UNHCR and UNICEF had been drawing the two organizations closer together in their work. While UNICEF had started as an emergency organization but had become increasingly involved in development activities and, recently, the protection of the rights of the child, UNHCR had been founded as an agency for the protection of the rights of refugees, but had soon found itself obliged to respond to emergencies.

81. In the wake of the cold war, the world was faced with emergencies on an unprecedented scale. A little over a year ago, emergencies in the Persian Gulf region and the Horn of Africa had brought together Governments, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in a common effort to forge a well-coordinated international emergency response system. As a result, UNHCR had strengthened its internal emergency preparedness and response capacity by building up five UNHCR emergency teams, stockpiling relief goods and entering into agreements with several government disaster forces and non-governmental personnel. At the same time, UNHCR had strengthened its cooperation with UNICEF and WFP in order to ensure more effective and efficient coordination of operations as well as appeals for funds.

82. In what had formerly been known as Yugoslavia, UNHCR and UNICEF had joined together with WHO, as a complement to the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to provide relief assistance to 1.5 million refugees and displaced persons in the largest refugee crisis that Europe had faced since the end of the Second World War. The two agencies were also working closely together in the Horn of Africa.

83. Response to emergencies must be rapid yet commensurate with the specific needs of each situation. UNICEF had been a pioneer in devising means of ensuring access to victims through corridors of peace or zones of tranquillity. However, both UNHCR and UNICEF were increasingly operating in situations where effective central power did not extend to all regions of the country, as in Yugoslavia and the Horn of Africa. In such situations, consent for passage of relief convoys from local militias or warlords was essential.

(Mrs. Ogata)

It was therefore important to devise new and pragmatic means of reaching those in need of help, especially women and children.

84. One of the more recent phenomena that affected adequate response to emergencies was the introduction of sanctions. While sanctions were an important weapon in the post cold war period, they could also be a double-edged sword, since they could be detrimental to the provision of humanitarian assistance. Unless such sanctions clearly permitted the delivery of food and medicines to those in need, they would punish those who were already the weakest, particularly women and children. Moreover, by worsening a country's economic and material base, sanctions might increase tension and instability, causing new flows of refugees into neighbouring countries.

85. Humanitarian emergencies and returnee operations increasingly took place in areas of conflict. In such situations, special measures were needed not only for the protection of the victims of the conflict, but also for the protection of the staff of humanitarian organizations. In recent months, both UNICEF and UNHCR personnel had lost their lives in the performance of their duties, and it was important to bear in mind that the life of a staff member was just as precious as that of a refugee.

86. There was a need to link emergency and development in situations in which an emergency had been overcome and the primary need was to bridge the gap between relief and development. A current example was northern Iraq, where UNHCR had met the emergency requirements of the population and was phasing out its assistance in order to enable organizations involved in ongoing development assistance, such as UNICEF, to play a greater role. That issue was particularly critical in the context of the voluntary repatriation of refugees. While there were increasing opportunities for refugees to return home, most of the countries to which they were returning had been devastated by many years of conflict and would require comprehensive national rehabilitation and construction programmes. The international community's current efforts to strengthen the response to humanitarian emergencies would be just a temporary palliative if parallel efforts were not made to encourage and pursue development opportunities. Returning refugees must be made a part of that development. Greater inter-agency cooperation and coordination would help relief and development agencies to coordinate their efforts, and UNHCR looked to UNICEF, with its experience in both emergency work and development activities, to play an important role in that area.

87. UNHCR greatly valued inter-agency cooperation in its difficult task of protecting and assisting refugees. In particular, she welcomed the recent establishment of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Emergencies, which should help reinforce the already existing close relationship that UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR had developed in the course of many difficult and complex emergencies. Such inter-agency cooperation should be broadened to include other agencies.

88. Mr. GRANT (Executive Director) said that UNHCR was one of the most important organizations of the United Nations system and it had responded remarkably to the emergency situations that had arisen in many parts of the world.

89. Mrs. FRECHETTE (Canada) said that her delegation welcomed the Executive Director's comments on the reforms taking place in the United Nations, the Fund's commitment to work with other agencies through such initiatives as the UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education, the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy, and its increased cooperation with UNFPA and WHO in undertaking a global approach to AIDS programming. That would lead to improved communication, administration and effectiveness within the United Nations as a whole.

90. While such coordination initiatives were commendable, UNICEF should focus greater attention on working with Governments, other United Nations agencies and the United Nations Secretariat in order to introduce structural changes in the United Nations development system. Basic reforms were an absolute necessity if the United Nations was to maintain its relevance in the development field. Such reforms should be of the type recommended in the Nordic United Nations Project and should lead to more effective and transparent governance and policy-setting at both the system and agency levels. UNICEF must seek to retain its comparative advantages while recognizing that it could accomplish much more as part of a larger, more integrated and better-governed United Nations, at both the local and global levels.

91. Her delegation thanked UNICEF for its full cooperation during the ongoing institutional evaluation being conducted by Canada, Australia, Denmark and Switzerland. The evaluation was reviewing the Fund's programme strategies, management and cooperation with other United Nations development agencies, as well as development agencies outside the United Nations. The evaluation would include in-depth country and regional analyses at the field level, as well as sectoral and thematic analyses of such key areas as women in development; health, water and sanitation; and emergencies. The evaluation would provide a clearer understanding of the Fund's role and position in a rapidly changing world. The results of the evaluation should enable the members of the Executive Board to make constructive recommendations on ways to improve the Fund's programme and administration. The evaluation might also encourage the Board to demonstrate more effective governance and improve the quality of its policy advice to UNICEF.

92. While technical assistance would be helpful to all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union as they restructured their economies, her delegation considered that UNICEF, with its special mandate for women and children, should focus primary attention on the poorest, least developed countries of that region and on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and women in those countries. The Fund should also work closely with other United Nations development agencies active in the region, using unified United Nations offices as its base of operations.

(Mrs. Frechette, Canada)

93. One of the Fund's major achievements over the past year had been the work undertaken by the secretariat and the Reference Group in preparing technical recommendations for presentational improvements in various budget formats. The recommendations of the Reference Group and the secretariat would result in the production of a single global programme budget document that would contain clear and transparent information on the financial and staffing implications of all decisions taken by the Board on global funds submissions. While her delegation fully endorsed those technical recommendations, it considered that the entire question of global funds required further examination from a policy perspective. The strength of the Fund's operations had always been in its field delivery. In order to maintain that comparative advantage and develop it further, UNICEF should ensure that its operations continued to be driven primarily by its country programmes. For that reason, her delegation favoured both the consolidation of such funds and their overall reduction.

94. Her delegation was not convinced that changes in priorities during the implementation of country programmes should be resolved through the use of global funds. An alternative might be simply to revise country programme allocations as soon as new priorities emerged. In any event, field offices should be encouraged, from the outset of the programming process, to select themes that were most relevant for the host country and to incorporate them into their respective country programmes.

95. Canada had the political will to implement the commitment to the World Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children. It had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in December 1991. In May 1992, it had launched an action plan entitled "Brighter Futures", which focused priority on children at risk. At that time, Canada had announced a $500 million child-development initiative, which included a $20 million partnership for a children's fund for Canadian non-governmental organizations working internationally. That international fund was completely additional to Canada's aid budget. While the economic situation was difficult all over the world, all countries must continue to show their long-term commitment, both domestically and internationally, by providing real additional financing to the cause of the most vulnerable children of the world.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.